

ELIZABETH TOWN - HELM
CEMETERY

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Kentucky

Ancestral Homes

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Helm Cemetery

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

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Helm Cemetery

This pioneer cemetery contains the graves of John L. Helm who served two incomplete terms as governor of Kentucky, and his son Confederate General Ben Hardin Helm who fell at Chickamauga on September 20, 1863. Ben Hardin Helm and Abraham Lincoln married half-sisters, Emilie and Mary Todd, the daughters of Robert S. Todd of Lexington, Kentucky.

Helm Cemetery

Plans Have Been Made to Beautify the Historic Landmark

By KAY SHARON
Enterprise Staff Writer

If you happen to be interested in local historical landmarks and are concerned over the current condition of the Helm Cemetery on North Dixie, you can put your mind at ease.

Dr. Robert Robbins, who now owns the property, has plans to beautify the cemetery. He explained, "The old rock wall encloses about one-third of an acre, but I have an acre set aside for the cemetery itself and a plan drawn up for what it will eventually look like."

Robbins said that rocks will be placed on the banks around the cemetery where earth has been cut away. "In between the rocks will be planted English ivy and some small shrub-

bery. A pebbled sidewalk will be constructed from the current opening in the stone wall with steps going up to the entrance. An iron railing is planned for the steps," explained Robbins.

While the doctor noted that there will eventually be commercial construction all around the cemetery, he added, "There will be parking for the cemetery to make it more easily accessible to the public. You used to have to park out along the road and walk across the field to get to it."

Robbins continued, "When I first bought the property, the land all around the cemetery was grown up and you had to walk through weeds as high as your head. Many of the headstones were overturned and

they have all been returned to their proper places."

Robbins said that he has had much correspondence with members of the Helm family and has explained his plan to them. "They are in agreement with my intentions for the cemetery," he said.

According to Robbins, the closest living relative to members of the family buried in the cemetery is Kennady Helm, a Louisville attorney. "He is in charge of a trust fund set up at First Hardin National Bank for the upkeep of the cemetery. Relatives contribute to the fund, but it is mostly used for mowing the land within the wall and there has been little attention given to the grounds outside the wall.

Robbins said that work on

the cemetery should be complete by the end of this summer. However, he noted that current construction around it would be finished before work on the cemetery is completed.

According to a deed dated Oct. 26, 1912 in which John L. and Lucy A. Helm deeded the property to the Hardin Realty Company, a special provision was made for the cemetery. The deed states, "Out of the above boundary is excepted and reserved the graveyard including one acre of land with the privilege of entrance thereto and exit therefrom.

"It is further agreed that neither the second party nor anyone holding under it shall cut any of the timber on the present field surrounding the graveyard and extending to the pike, but the timber on said field shall remain as it is, unless it dies or is blown down."

Concerning the provision for the timber, Robbins said, "The field around the cemetery wasn't fenced when I bought the property so it's difficult to tell just how much timber the deed refers to and, of course, no one really knows where the original road was."

He said that several trees were cut around the cemetery with the permission of the Helm family.

Robbins noted that no one really knows how many people are buried in the cemetery. However, there are several famous people buried there.

The most notable is John L. Helm, two-time governor of Kentucky. Helm served as lieutenant governor under John J. Crittenden who was elected in 1843. In 1850, Crittenden resigned to become U. S. attorney general and Helm served the remainder of Crittenden's term.

Helm himself went on to become attorney general under President Midard Fillmore. Helm was elected governor in his own right in 1867. However, according to Mrs. E. I. Richerson of the Hardin Coun-



ENTERPRISE STAFF PHOTO

The historic Helm cemetery on North Dixie stands high after excavation for new buildings. The cemetery, where Gov. John Helm and Civil War General Ben Hardin Helm are buried, soon will be surrounded with commercial development. But the landmark is being preserved and renovated.

ty Historical Society, Helm was inaugurated on his death bed at the Helm House on North Dixie and died within a few days. The Bob Wright family now owns the home and resides there.

Another famous Kentuckian buried in the cemetery is Ben Hardin Helm who served as a Confederate brigadier general in the Civil War. Killed at the Battle of Chickamauga in Southern Tennessee, Helm was originally buried in Atlanta. However, some 20 years later his remains were moved to the Helm Cemetery.

The Helmwood Medical Center and Pharmacy, Western Pancake House and Cinema Theatre have been built on the Helm property purchased by Dr. Robbins. A veterinary clinic is under construction.

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